

Doctoral Training Centre:
The Practice of Social Research

2011-2012

Convenor and Lecturer:
Dr Eric Jensen (e.jensen@warwick.ac.uk)

DTC: The Practice of Social Research

CONTACT DETAILS

Module Convenor: Dr Eric Jensen

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Office: Ramphal Building, R2.17

Lecture / Seminars:

Term 1: Wednesdays 3-6 on Weeks 3,5,8 and 10
(Room: L5)

Term 2: Wednesdays 3-6 on Weeks 1,3,5,7 and 9
(Room: HO.51)

Term 3: Wednesday 3-6 on Week 2 (2 May 2012)
(Room: L5)

Term Dates for 2011-12 Academic Year

Autumn Term	Monday 3 October 2011 - Saturday 10 December 2011
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Spring Term	Monday 9 January 2012 - Saturday 17 March 2012
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Summer Term	Monday 23 April 2012 - Saturday 30 June 2012
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Module Aims:

This module introduces essential conceptual and practical ideas and procedures for conducting high quality research in the social sciences. The module also includes a number of optional skills training sessions.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this module you should be able to:

Demonstrate an understanding of the process, design and ethics of social research.

Demonstrate the ability to apply your understanding of the practice of social research to your own research.

Teaching Methods:

Each regular session for this module will include some lecture and some small group discussion or student presentations. Students will be expected to read the assigned texts and complete indicated tasks prior to the class sessions. They will also be called upon to give presentations from time to time, which will require advanced preparation.

Session Overview

Week	Date	Lecture Topic
Term 1, wk. 3	19/10/2011	Introduction to the Module, Overview of Topics and Research Questions
Term 1, wk. 5	02/11/2011	Research Design, Frameworks and Paradigms
Term 1, wk. 8	23/11/2011	Sampling, Generalisability and Inference
Term 1, wk. 10	02/12/2011	Quality Assurance in Social Research
Term 2, wk. 1	11/01/2012	Introduction to Research Ethics: Theory and research
Term 2, wk. 3	25/01/2012	Introduction to Research Ethics: Legal and Regulatory Aspects of Social Research
Term 2, wk. 5	08/02/2012	Models of Social Research I: Practical Research and Putting Research into Practice
Term 2, wk. 7	22/02/2012	Models of Social Research II
Term 2, wk. 9	07/03/2012	Technologies of Social Research and Introduction to Sources for Secondary Data Analysis
Term 3, wk. 2	02/05/2012	'Impact': Relationship between Social Research and Policy, Practice and Public Impacts

Teaching Method:

Combined Lecture / Seminar

Readings:

Essential readings are identified in this module guide. A few essential readings are 'in press' (not yet published) and these will be provided electronically.

You are expected to undertake additional readings from the further readings listed here and through your own searches using the full range of excellent resources on offer at Warwick. Participation in class discussions based on your reading of these materials is expected every week.

Assessment:

Assessment is by departmental arrangement.

Recommended internet resources

Free online journal with a lot of methods coverage: *Sociological Research Online*

Weekly Topics and Readings (*Subject to Revision*)

Term 1, Week 3 (19 October 2011) - Introduction to the module and overview of topics

This lecture provides an overview of the module and outlines the core issues commonly included under the auspices of ‘the practice of social research’.

Topics in this first session will include:

- Identifying specific research objectives, issues and questions
- Developing ‘researchable’ and SMART questions?
- Refining (narrowing down) your research topic
- Operationalisation of measures
- Units of analysis

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen

Activity:

1. All students to give very short presentation on their background and their research topic.
2. Students to break into small groups (ideally 3-person groups) to develop at least one possible research question for each person’s topic. These research questions will then be presented to the whole class for feedback and discussion.

Term 1, Week 5 (2 November 2011) – Research Design, Frameworks and Paradigms

- Paradigms of social research
- Principles of research design
- Combining research methods
- Practical strategies for combining quantitative and qualitative methods
- Models and frameworks for research in quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen

Activity: Research design and you!

Workshop-style activity discussing possible approaches you could take in your own dissertation. Think about whether mixed methods social research makes sense for your topic.

Essential reading:

Morgan, D. (2007). Paradigms lost and Pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 48-76.

Morgan, D. L. (1998). Practical strategies for combining qualitative and quantitative methods: Applications to health research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 8(3), p. 362-376.

Term 1, Week 8 (23 November 2011) – Sampling, Generalisability and Inference

This session will address the crucial issues of sampling and generalizability for qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. Essentially, we will consider the question: How can we develop reliable knowledge about a larger population through research with a smaller group of people?

Further issues to be addressed this week include:

- Inference in social research
- Correlation and causation in social research
- Keeping your claims in check
- What is/are the audience(s) for your research, and how should this influence the kinds of claims you make?
- What balance should you strike between elaboration of empirical detail and engagement with relevant theory?

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen

Essential reading:

TBA

Week Term 1, Week 10 (7 December 2011) – Quality Assurance in Social Research

- What does good quality social research look like?
- Procedures for ensuring quality
- Recording and Transcription
- Criteria for assessing / ensuring quality (validity, reliability and alternative methods)
- Quality assurance in the conversion of qualitative data into quantitative (content analysis and inter-coder reliability)

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen

Essential Reading:

Gaskell, George, and Martin W. Bauer. 2000. "Towards public accountability: Beyond sampling, reliability and validity." Pp. 336-350 in *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, edited by Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell. London: Sage.

Thorne, S. 1997. "The art (and science) of critiquing qualitative research." Pp. 117-132 in *Completing a qualitative project: Details and dialogue*, edited by J M Morse. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Further Reading:

Jensen, E., & Holliman, R. (2009). Investigating science communication to inform science outreach and public engagement. In R. Holliman, E. Whitelegg, E. Scanlon, S. Smidt & J. Thomas (Eds.), *Investigating science communication in the information age: Implications for public engagement and popular media* (pp. 55-71). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Term 2, Week 1 (11 January 2012) – Introduction to Research Ethics: theory and research

- History of Research Ethics in relation to human subjects
- Theoretical and philosophical perspectives on research ethics
- The five principles, critiques and other perspectives
- Issues of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity in social science research
- Empirical research on research ethics and informed consent
- Issues involved in negotiating access, the role of gatekeepers and the role of participants/respondents
- Ethical responsibilities of the researcher
- Begin to consider ethical issues in your own research in relation to data collection, analysis and dissemination
- Have an understanding of ethical issues when working with vulnerable people

Lecturer: Lecturer from WMS/SHSS to provide lecture on aspects of above topics; Dr Eric Jensen to address other topics.

Activity:

Form a 4- or 5-person group and summarise the ethical issues that might be associated with your research plans. Provide feedback to members of your group and try to identify additional ethical issues or implications. Next, apply some of the principles and ethics theory discussed this week to your research topics. Be prepared to present to the full class the kinds of issues you uncovered and ways of analysing these ethical issues in light of ethical theories and principles.

*ADVANCE PREPARATION REQUIRED - **Homework:** Prepare a ½ page summary of any ethical issues you can think of that might be applicable to your research plans. Be prepared to discuss these ethical issues in small groups.

Essential reading:

Corrigan, O. P. (2003). Empty ethics: The problem with informed consent. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 25(3).

Term 2, Week 3 (25 January 2012)– Introduction to Research Ethics: Legal and regulatory aspects of social research

- Ethics codes of different professional associations
- Issues of data protection and storage
- Requirements of research ethics and governance at Warwick

- Research governance; ethics permission procedures and timescales; legal aspects including sponsorship, data protection and data storage, Mental Capacity Act, CRB checks
- Practical guidance on preparing informed consent forms and participant contact letters.

Lecturer: SHSS / WMS lecturer to provide lecture on above topics; RSS to provide introduction to ethics procedures at Warwick; Dr Eric Jensen provide further thoughts.

Activity (*Bring Laptop with Wireless Internet Capability if Possible*):

1. Form a 3- to 4-person group and discuss in detail at least one professional code of research ethics relevant to your disciplines or fields of study (e.g. the British Psychological Association). Prepare a 5-minute joint presentation summarising the key aspects of this professional code and its implications for research practice in your discipline / field.

2. Returning to your same groups, go around to each person and discuss your draft ethics approval forms. If you do not think you need ethics approval, discuss why and seek your group's feedback on your arguments. If you need ethics approval, discuss what you have written on the form and the ways you are planning to mitigate ethical issues in your research.

*ADVANCE PREPARATION REQUIRED - **Homework:** Prepare a draft ethics approval form based on your current understanding of your PhD dissertation topic (best guess about what your topic will be or hypothetical is fine if you are not certain). Work out the details to the best of your ability and then identify the areas that still need development. Be prepared to discuss in class.

Essential reading:

Warwick University research ethics guidelines and professional association guidelines.

Further reading:

American Sociological Association (1997) Code of Ethics (approved by ASA membership 1997) <http://www.asanet.org.members/ecoderev.htm>

British Sociological Association (2002) Statement of Ethical Practice, <http://www.britsoc.org.uk/about/ethic.htm>

Term 2, Week 5 (8 February 2012) – Models of Social Research I: Practical Research and Putting Research into Practice

- Action and applied research
- Evaluation and impact research

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen and guest speaker Andy Moss, Education Research Officer, Chester Zoo

Readings:

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ibid. (1994). "Grounded theory methodology: An overview." Pp. 273-285 in *Handbook of qualitative research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Term 2, Week 7 (22 February 2012) – Models of Social Research II

- Pilot studies
- Case studies
- Grounded theory
- Idiographic research

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen and guest speaker Professor Brady Wagoner (University of Aalborg)

Reading:

TBA

Term 2, Week 9 (7 March 2012) –**Technologies of Social Research and Introduction to Sources for Secondary Data Analysis**

- Practical and critical issues in using analytic software, web-based surveys, online interviewing, digital audio recordings and other forms of research technology available for the social sciences.
- Identifying the range of sources for secondary data analysis and the key issues involved in using such sources rather than doing original data collection.

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen

***ADVANCE PREPARATION REQUIRED - Activity:**

Each student to identify one data source available for secondary data analysis, which is relevant to their own research. Give brief 1-2 minute presentation on the data source to the whole class (provide one powerpoint slide on your chosen data source that identifies its subject coverage, level of accessibility (do you need permission to access?) and conditions of use (do you need permission to use and publish?). This powerpoint slide must be e-mailed to e.jensen@warwick.ac.uk by **3pm on the preceding Friday**.

Essential reading:

Kelle, Udo (2000). "Computer-assisted analysis: Coding and indexing." Pp. 282-298 in *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, edited by Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell. London: Sage.

Further reading:

Mann, C and Stewart, F (2000) *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online*, London, Sage

Hine, C. (2000) *Virtual Ethnography*, London: Sage.

Term 3, Week 2 (2 May 2012) – ‘Impact’: Relationship between research and policy, practice and public impacts

- The Research Excellence Framework and the ‘impact agenda’ for higher education
- Research impacts
- Using research to inform policy making, practice and publics
- The uses and misuses of research by policy makers
- Public engagement with research
- Public engagement and the media
- Involving publics and participants in research
- Warwick Festival of Social Sciences

Lecturer: Dr Eric Jensen; *Guest speaker:* Social Sciences Impact Officer

Essential reading:

- Research Excellence Framework webpage
- Concordat on public engagement on National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement website
- ESRC public engagement pages and advice